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Mr. Nixon's Crisis Within A Crisis

In an uncommonly candid passage of his *Six Crises*, Richard Nixon owned that his sputtering outrage over John F. Kennedy's campaign call for an American-backed Cuban invasion actually camouflaged a plan, already in the works, which he favored.

Mr. Nixon, then, engaged in a patriotic act when Mr. Kennedy, in their television debate of October 22, 1960, proposed that Cuban exiles be given American assistance in deposing Fidel Castro. He was just putting on when he called the proposal, with all theunction at his command (and that is plentiful), "the most shockingly reckless proposal ever made in our history by a presidential candidate during a campaign." The Bay of Pigs fiasco suggests that Mr. Nixon was entirely right, whether he believed himself or not.

Now two Washington reporters, in a hook on the CIA, impart yet another twist to Mr. Nixon's dizzying dual role. They report on the authority of one of the former vice president's campaign aides that "Mr. Nixon was hoping for the invasion before November 8 (election day) because it would have been

a clutch to win' the election if the Eisenhower Administration destroyed Fidel Castro in the closing days of the presidential campaign."

In other words, Mr. Nixon not only did not oppose the invasion, he hoped it would be timed to give his campaign a boost. As it turned out, the invasion was delayed until the following April, after Mr. Kennedy's victory and inauguration. But this road not taken adds another intriguing "what if" to the history of presidential campaigns.

What if the invasion had been launched at the height of the campaign, after Mr. Nixon had called the idea "shockingly reckless"? What would he have said? That it was reckless as an idea in Mr. Kennedy's mind, but safe and wise as the act of the administration he sought to succeed?

Mr. Nixon's forensic talents are impressive, as watchers of his "Checkers" speech of 1952 and others will recall. He would have found a way to bridge the contradiction handily. But all the same, it would have been an intriguing about face to witness.